

THE MARRIAGE REGISTER OF THE REV. ANDREW GRANT, D.D., 1809-1836

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A CENTURY is not long in the story of a city like Edinburgh, but it is long enough to show social changes of interest to those who live in a new time. A Marriage Register of the first generation of the “eighteen hundreds” contains entries which appear remote to us, but it is plain that the greater the change we see the more do we find life unchanged. The saying of Lord Rosebery that everything before the Reform Bill of 1832 might form matter for a Scottish History Society seems accurate.

This little Register appears to have been the pocket-book of the minister who made the entries, and was carried by him to weddings, or used to enter engagements before the ceremony. Grant was born in 1757, ordained to Portmoak on September 16, 1784; was translated to Kilmarnock on May 6, 1802, and came to the capital on October 20, 1808, when he was inducted to the Canongate Parish. He served that cure for two years only, going to Trinity College on October 11, 1810, and then to St Andrew's in the New Town on January 14, 1813. There he remained till his death on July 2, 1836. From the University of St Andrews he received his Doctorate of Divinity in 1807, at the age of fifty, and in the following year was Moderator of the General Assembly.

The Register contains entries of the three Edinburgh charges, beginning in November 1809, and ending June 25, 1836, exactly a week before his death. There are in all 828 entries—four from the Canongate ministry, and thirty-nine from Trinity College. The volume covers the time of the Napoleonic Wars and the years immediately after, and soldier entries are numerous. The twenty-four, twenty-six, and twenty-four of the years 1812 to 1814 become forty-one in 1815 (with six army names); sixty-three in 1816 (with eight army entries), and fifty-three in 1817, (with three army entries). The figures remain high—fifty-one, fifty-four, and forty-six gradually sinking to the thirties and twenties. Our own experience will remind us how busy Eros was during the activity of Mars. Most of the regiments and ranks are familiar enough:—The Royal Scots, the 42nd, the 73rd, the 75th, and 88th regiments; Major, Captain, Sergeant, and so on. Others are unfamiliar to-day. Militia men were

much in evidence, marrying with the "permission of the Commanding Officer," and came from the militia of Lanark, Argyle, Ross-shire, Perthshire, or Stirling. Cavalry men of the South could also find admirers and wives in Edinburgh, the 6th Dragoon Guards being mentioned in 1810 and 1816, the 2nd Dragoon Guards in 1815 and 1832, and the Queen's Bays in 1832. At Leith and at Edinburgh Castle English uniforms and the English accent were familiar. Notices of cornets and ensigns make one think of the wasp-waisted officer youths of *Vanity Fair* and the East India Company's service. The Bengal Army also appears. Since Dr Grant's ministry was in the centre of the city, the navy is not prominent, but we may weave what romance we please round the "seaman" from the *Nimrod*, the "sailors" from the *Dover*, and the Revenue Cruiser, *Stork*, the Captain of an East Indiaman, and the girl from Plymouth who married a shipwright. Altogether forty entries are from army and navy.

Naturally, the greater part of the entries tell of trades and professions like those of to-day, but some refer to forgotten and disused customs and trades. Social differences are more marked, the use of "Miss" generally signifying some one of good social standing. Men servants were usual in the large Edinburgh houses of the rich and noble; chairmen were familiar figures in St Andrew Square and neighbourhood (the writer knew the daughter of one who kept his chairs near India Street); the butler, the house-steward, the groom, and the coachman are about as scarce in central Edinburgh of to-day as the weaver, the tanner, and the stocking-maker, though all were once common enough; the teacher of French, the landscape painter, the sculptor, the teacher of music and the portrait painter found their clients in the same houses as were served by the perfumer, the silk-weaver, the shawl manufacturer (was this a remnant of Picardy?); the coach-hirer, the umbrella-maker, and the watch-case-maker. Two dukes cast their aristocratic light across the pages, one entry being of a natural daughter of the Duke of Gordon: she married in December of 1815. The other is that of a servant to His Grace of Bedford. An "English solicitor" is married to a girl from Northumberland [was it a runaway match?]; while the surgeon, the banker, the student, the lawyer and the "merchant, London," all find a place.

Before the days of the Waverley Station it was possible to find "Canal Street" upon the map, but where was "St Ann's Street"? On the ground where the trains now run there was open space for amusements. Travelling entertainers reared their booths there, and charmed the eyes of the citizens. This explains why such entries as "comedian" and "equestrian" occur, and the nameless gentleman who was the "exhibiter of giant"! Some curious—at least, unfamiliar—surnames occur, chiefly

from across the Border—Butterbee, Gravel, Romelie, Jinans, Cackle, Bread, Valley, and Vedder.

In April 1818 Grant married a couple from Portmoak and Cleish, and in December of the same year a couple from Portmoak. Sixteen years had passed since he left that rural parish, and he had perhaps christened some of them.

It is not without interest to find that ruled lines appear in the Register in 1823; the old man is now sixty-six, and they would be useful. Two pages remain ruled but unused, each for five entries. He was thus ready for some time to come, but not too far ahead. It was not necessary.

Dr Grant was Chaplain in Ordinary to George III, George IV, and William IV, Dean of the Chapel Royal, joint and for a short time sole collector for the Ministers' Widows' Fund. His third son and fourth child became minister of St Mary's, Edinburgh, in 1843, having been in South Leith during the last twelve years of his father's life.

